REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended to the Applicants' representatives in the personal interview on October 12, 2004. The amendments to the claims and remarks included in this paper are based on the discussion between the Examiner and the Applicants representatives in the personal interview.

Claims 1-38 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1, 6, 12,17, 21, and 26 are currently amended. No claims are cancelled. Claims 31-38 are newly added. No new subject matter has been entered. Reconsideration and allowance of all the rejected claims are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-30 are currently rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Harned et al. ("Harned"). Applicants respectfully disagree with this rejection for at least the following reasons.

Claims 1, 17, and 21 recite the feature of one or more virtual machines configured to run an operating system, among other things. Claims 6 and 26 include the recitation of, among other things, one or more virtual machines that are configured to run an operating system. Claim 12 recites, among other things, the virtual machines are configured to run an operating system.

In an exemplary embodiment, a system for evaluating a user's IT skills may present a practical exercise to a user (see the Specification at page 3, lines 11-13). Presenting the practical exercise to the user may include launching one or more virtual machines with appropriate configurations for the practical exercise (see the Specification at page 3, lines 14-16). The practical exercise may require the user to perform tasks on the virtual machines associated with the practical exercise (see the Specification at page 3, lines 17-21). The virtual machines may include virtual representations of computer workstations configured to run various operating systems. For example, one virtual machine may be configured to run the UNIX operating

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system, whereas another may be configured to run the Windows NT® operating system (page 5, line 28-page 6, line 1). The tasks may include changing a state of one or more of the virtual machines. For example, after launching the virtual machines, the user may install a piece of software on one of the virtual machines, configure an existing piece of software installed on one of the virtual machines, configure a hardware device "connected" to one of the virtual machines, modify a system configuration file, or make some other change (see the Specification at page 3, lines 25-28).

Harned apparently discloses a training system that may include a plurality of exercise modules associated with a plurality of exercises that may demonstrate to a user in an interactive fashion how to use a target software package (see Harned at col. 5, lines 6-18). These modules may walk the user through an exercise with a demonstration, such as an animated demonstration (see Harned at col. 5, lines 19-30). However, Harned does not disclose that the exercise modules are configured to run an operating system. Therefore, Harned is deficient at least for failing to disclose one or more virtual machines configured to run an operating system.

Since Harned neither discloses nor suggests the invention claimed in independent claims 1, 6, 12, 17, 21, and 26, these claims are allowable over the prior art. Claims 2-5, 7-11, 13-16, 18-20, 22-24, and 27-30 depend from and add features to claims 1, 6, 12, 17, 21, and 26, and are therefore allowable at least based on their dependency.
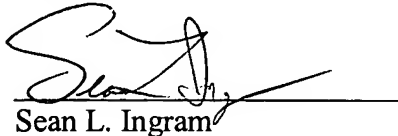
NEWLY ADDED CLAIMS

Claims 31-38 are newly added. These claims depend from and add features to claims 1, 6, 12, 17, 21, and 26. Therefore, these claims are allowable at least based on their dependency.

For the foregoing reasons, reconsideration and allowance of all the claims pending in the application are requested.

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If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

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Respectfully submitted,

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